

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Standing Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Belinda Ray (D1), Chair
Councilor Spencer Thibodeau (D2)
Councilor Andrew Zarro (D4)

Minutes February 17, 2021

Members Present: Council Ray, Councilor Thibodeau, Councilor Zarro

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Casey Zorn

Guests: Mayor Kate Snyder, Greg Jordan

Meeting called to order at 5:37 PM.

January Minutes

Councilor Thibodeau motions to approve the January meeting minutes. Councilor Zarro seconds the motion. January minutes passed unanimously, 3-0.

Sustainability Update

Have posted Sustainability Associate position and applications closed today. Have received good responses from pesticide applicators for yearly summary report. Have gone live with energy platform which will make paying utilities and tracing key metrics much easier. Have been following developments in solar industry, especially with moves made by Central Maine Power (CMP). City Manager and Superintendent signed a letter to the State to remind them that many cities and school districts are worried about this matter. Public Utility Commission (PUC) issued advisory warning that CMP data that the City has requested should be made available. DEP issued a report on petroleum storage facilities. Drafted comments to Natural Resource Defense Committee, which emphasized the need for action. Sustainability Office is sending out postcards to remind 600 beverage distributors about Phase 2 of the Plastic Straw Ordinance. Electric Vehicles charging stations are getting good use. Last Coffee and Climate had great turnout with transportation theme. This event occurs on the second Friday of every month.

Will coordinate with Public Works to publish data from wells at the landfill solar array. This reporting is thought to be required once a year, but Troy will check on this.

The CDC would like to brief Committee on air quality monitoring at a future meeting.

GPCOG/PACTS Stimulus Funded Projects

This is the first year that GPCOG is trying to organize the region and planning initiatives to provide future funding. GPCOG has made clear that this is not necessarily the list for Biden infrastructure money. This list is just to begin organizing regional programs and how they want to distribute transit and other funds. There will be future rounds if this Biden infrastructure money comes through, and the S&T committee will continue to develop this with Public Works

and PACTS so that that Sustainability and Transportation Committee is ready for the next round of GPCOG project roundup.

City manager talked with Chris Branch and submitted memo of shovel-ready projects for future PACTS funding. Got permission to submit more than 5 since Portland is larger than other communities. This list includes: (1) Traffic signal, communications, and RRFB improvements, (2) Arterial and collector paving, (3) Brighton Avenue Multimodal, (4) Morrill's Corner, (5) West Commercial Pathway Phase III/ECG Connector Baxter/Veranda, (6) Franklin Street Phase I, Marginal to Somerset, and (7) Commercial Street Master Plan and related transportation improvements.

Committee Comment on GPCOG/PACTS Stimulus Funded Projects

How can community members help make progress on these projects or stay in the loop? Community members can send emails to committee members or call. Troy maintains a folder with public comment. These conversations will also continue in future committee meetings with opportunity for public comment. The hope is also that these projects get started before funding stream is public. Updates will be posted on a specific infrastructure webpage that Troy will create on the S&T Committee page through the Sustainability Office website. Can also write a letter to Senator Susan Collins.

Public Comment on GPCOG/PACTS Stimulus Funded Project

Markos Miller: Believes Phase 2 and 3 of Franklin St Redesign actually fixes the problems, and Phase 1 (which is currently the only proposed infrastructure project for GPCOG funding) will simply push the issues down the street and is a short-term fix. Emphasizes importance of Franklin St redesign project, especially including the latter phases, and importance of planning early for potential federal funds beyond GPCOG funding.

Wendy Cherubini of May St: On Franklin Redesign, voices need to discuss the phasing of the plan in any discussion of the project, since the last two phases unlock the greatest potential of the project. Would like a City staffer who champions the Franklin Project.

Bryan Eng of Stores St: Works on Douglas Commons and Lambert Woods. Would like a node at Lambert Woods and potential extension of Route 2 to this area. Supports Franklin Arterial Redesign, Exit 5 Retirement/Redesign, and other projects. Stresses these projects are also economic development opportunities and address existential issues. These projects all tie into One Climate Future and Plan 2030. Emphasizes language of phasing, chipping away a little bit at a time, and accessing funding for them.

Peninsula Loop Redesign Update with Greg Jordan

GPCOG and METRO are working together on Portland Peninsula Loop bus route reboot. They are currently engaged in the public engagement process until approximately March and will come back to the Committee with updates and insight gained from this process. Outreach has been conducted in five different languages to ensure robustness. Open to having more meetings if the S&T believes necessary.

The two major redesigns involve Route 1 and Route 8. The Route 8 particularly has a dedicated ridership for those who most rely upon public transit. Both routes run every 30 minutes, with Route 8 being one-direction service. A main focus is ensuring bidirectional service for both routes and serving underrepresented communities. There is a concentrated need for good public transit in the East Bayside community which is underserved.

The Project Advisory Committee has held public meetings where they have heard support for certain things like bidirectional service as well as faster, simpler, more direct service, and more multi-modal connectivity. There are also people who like the way routes currently work and are hesitant to see change.

Developed 4 strategy plan:

Strategy 1: Redesign several regional routes to create High Frequency Corridor along Congress Street, expand transit access across the city, and improve multimodal connections

Strategy 2: Redesign peninsula routes to meet mobility needs; increase transit frequency and span of service; expand geographical coverage on peninsula; and improve route convenience, simplicity, visibility, and user friendliness.

Strategy 3: Incorporate infrastructure improvements such as bus stop amenities, deployment of Transit Signal Priority (TSP), and streetscape/intersection treatments.

Strategy 4: Incorporate Service Delivery/Customer Service Innovations such as employer use of DirigoTouch Pass, coordination of services, scalable micro-transit program, and autonomous transit.

The Reboot proposes a short extension to Commercial Street and the eastern waterfront where there could be a mini transit hub for Route 2, Route 4, and the Huskey Line. Additionally, the Route 7 would be extended west along Congress St to help create the High Frequency Corridor. With this overly, a bus will come every 7 minutes and marketing and promotion will help change the way people can get around Portland. The Route 5 will also be extended along Congress St and loop Munjoy Hill to help with the High Frequency Corridor and fill need left by removal of former Route 1. Routes 1, 7, and 9 will together make up the High Frequency Corridor.

Major changes to Route 8, the new circular, include bidirectionality, connections to more major points on peninsula, and simpler looping. Points of concern with the proposed Route 8 include modifications to the Mercy Hospital/100 State St bus stop which serves an older population, lack of bus stop in the core of the West End, lack of bus stop on Congress St, lack of bus stop in Hannaford plaza and complications with alternatives to this stop. A new recommended Route 8 will hopefully be publicized in April taking into account ongoing public comment.

Currently in Phase 2 of the Reboot and looking toward Phase 3. Projecting launch of service changes toward end of 2022.

Committee Comment on Peninsula Loop Redesign

Councilor Zarro: What did engagement look like for people who live on Washington by Allen's Corner? *The Route 9 already covers this area well with half hour frequency during most days. Hope to increase frequency of this route with no structural changes.*

Councilor Thibodeau: Likes idea of 7-minute waits along Congress St with High Frequency Corridor. Worried about gaps on the West End in the proposed Route 8. Very worried about 100 State St stop changes. The City should potentially encourage a bus pull-in at the entrance to the Hannaford or other corrections to make that more feasible and easier fix. *Greg believes they will be able to maintain the 100 State St stop. The bigger issue that will require more thought is the Hannaford stop.*

Councilor Ray: Likes the extensions to Commercial Street and the eastern waterfront and the creation of the High Frequency Corridor. Wonders about the temporary nature of the extension on the Route 2. *Greg corrects that all extensions to the waterfront are full time.* Is Hannaford involved in the metro changes? *Hannaford has not yet been involved. When a preliminary decision is made, Hannaford will be involved. The harder bus stop is the one across the street from Hannaford because of the curve and speed of the street.* Also loves idea of mini hub on the eastern waterfront. Wonders about e-buses. *Expect delivery of first two electric buses in October which will hopefully begin full fleet transition by 2040. Will be substantial testing of system.*

Public Comment on Peninsula Route Redesign

Tony Donovan: Likes the connection to a mini hub at the Portland Ocean Terminal (POT), which may turn into a train station for commuter rail with connection to Lewiston. This will help get people onto the peninsula without a car.

Allen Armstrong of Spruce St: Wonders if the simplification and rerouting of Route 8 will automatically result in a quicker time around the route. *Greg Jordan answers that Route 8 will take longer with the re-route because of increase in length. Since 1 and 8 are being joined, this will allow for more resources and will therefore be more frequent. It will also be bidirectional, making it much more convenient.*

Ashley Babcock of Oak St: Identifies as a loyal metro rider. Wonders if there have there been any efforts to specifically target the younger population with outreach on the bus reroute or transit outreach in general and if there have there been any considerations to make the buses run later on weekends. Likes the 7-minute wait with a High Frequency Corridor. *Greg Jordan answers that they have a pass program with school systems and many university systems as a principal strategy to reach out to younger riders. Goals to continue to expand hours of operation. Currently no consistent end time between bus routes. Should aim to have all services going at a minimum from 6 Am-12 AM, if not 5 AM-1 AM. Agrees they need to work on better outreach, marketing, and promotion.*

Kenneth Capron: Appreciates the effort that went into developing the routes. Wonders if the drivers have been asked about the routes and if the timing would be thrown off. Will this require more drivers? Is the pulse still used to line up the riders? How is the City going to handle the extra costs of expanding the routes? What is the drive time between charges for electric buses? *Greg Jordan answers that they use Google Earth applications and driving on the ground for timings. No O&M capital costs yet. Will require more bus operators, increasing costs. Still a challenge to hire qualified CDL bus drivers. Fully staffed right now and confident can support expansions in the future. Would need to come back later and have a conversation about potential City contribution. First efforts will try to claim Federal and State support, as well as employers and universities having a stake in the Circulator. The Chamber of Commerce has voiced their support and will likely be a partner. With increased frequency of service, the coordination of a "pulse" has been less important. With the re-route, the Monument Square center employs this same concept as the "pulse." Many of the electric can go to 150-200 miles per charge in ideal conditions. With Portland bus conditions will likely make it at its worst around 150 miles. These numbers will likely continue to improve.*

Tica Douglas of Munjoy St: Is there any discussion about moving to mid-size buses? Would like to see smaller buses since ridership seems to be low and creating unnecessary emissions. *Greg Jordan answers that cost of transit is actually in personnel. Need a fleet to be able to handle capacity on highest volume days.*

Carbon Fee and Dividend Program with Peter Monro

This proposal is similar to a motion approved by the S&T Committee 4 years ago. This proposal is to advocate local and regional support for federal carbon pricing. Federal carbon pricing is more accessible than state carbon pricing and will greatly help reach State and City climate goals. The proposed bill, House Resolution 763, is the most popular bill in the House with bipartisan support. A bill of this nature will be released in this spring and need to hear support from our communities. This bill will benefit Maine specifically because we have lower carbon footprint, lower income, and wood (which is a large Maine export) is not considered fossil fuel.

Public Comment on Carbon Fee and Dividend Program

Allan Armstrong of Spruce St: Supports this motion. Believes this motion is an efficient way to reduce carbon and is equitable in its distribution of dividends.

Tony Donovan, Portland resident: Supports this resolution on behalf of Maine Rail Transportation Coalition (MRTC).

Kenneth Capron: Very interested in a carbon exchange. Brings up Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI) which he supported. Without TCI, will take anything that works like a carbon exchange to fund climate initiatives. Believes there are better options but supports any kind of carbon exchange.

Mary King of Riverton Neighborhood: Supports this motion. As an educator, believes this bill is important to address the biggest injustices and change that climate stewards cannot address.

Peter Dugas of State St: Supports this motion. There is now a bipartisan resolution moving through Augusta as well as other municipalities joining to support the bill. We need federal policy more than just State policy. This is the most effective policy.

Ashley Babcock of Oak St: Supports this resolution. Believes supporting federal action on climate is the most important thing the City can do. Since this is a bipartisan bill, it is more sustainable and less likely to be overturned.

Maggy Wolf: Supports this resolution. Still believes individuals should put solar panels on your roofs and take small action but believes supporting this is the most important action for citizens and the City.

Committee Comment and Action on Carbon Fee and Dividend Program

Councilor Thibodeau and Ray both fully support this resolution with its current additions as they did in 2017. Councilor Zarro also supports moving forward with the resolution and believes we should take as progressive action as possible to combat climate change.

Councilor Zarro motions to approve the resolution and bring the resolution for a vote before the full Council. Thibodeau seconds the motions. The motion to approve the resolution and bring it before the full Council passes unanimously, (3-0).

Alignment and Conflicts Between One Climate Future and the Portland Green New Deal

Troy submitted a memo in the packet that gives more detail on the intersection between One Climate Future and the Green New Deal referendum. The creation of One Climate Future was an extensive two-year planning process that collaboratively took into account partner and community input. The Green New Deal as a referendum also had some public planning, but it focuses more on immediate action than One Climate Future. The two plans are very much aligned and do not have a lot of conflict. In terms of labor requirements, both plans promote job opportunities with One Climate Future discussing more in-depth collaboration, longer timeline, and a regional scope. Both plans require the City to adopt the State's stretch code. Changes in the building code will be important for both plans' goals to reach net zero emissions. As for workforce housing requirements, One Climate Future discusses collaboratively identifying a plan which aligns with the Housing Authority while the Green New Deal requires 25% of units require workforce housing (which still leaves room for similar collaboration).

Committee Comment on One Climate Future and Green New Deal

Councilor Ray: Sees workforce housing and labor stipulations in the Green New Deal as Housing Economic Community Development (HECD) Committee issues. Wonders if HECD has any desire to look at this referendum and make changes. Worried about linking to specific energy/building codes.

Councilor Thibodeau confirms that this is part of their work plan for the year, especially as it pertains to the rental advisory board but have not looked at impact of inclusionary zoning, though will likely take this up as well.

On energy code standards and third-party certification requirement in the Green New Deal, Troy believes that because state law and the attached stretch code requires continual adoption of up-to-date IECC energy requirements, the building code will be extremely rigorous and will essentially supersede the Green New Deal requirements. With the strictness of these code requirements, additional certifications may be useful to guide builders on how to build better.

Councilor Ray is still concerned with the Green New Deal building/energy requirements and how they will add unnecessary expense until the adoption of these stricter stretch codes. Also, the Green New Deal does not address the loophole between renovation and new building. Not clear on Council's ability since they cannot address Green Building Code for 5 years because of Referendum. Worried about mandated adoption sight unseen of stretch code.

Public Comment on One Climate Future and the Green New Deal

Eamonn Dundon of West End, Director of Advocacy for Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce: Believes One Climate Future is bold, visionary plan with clear pathways to a sustainable Portland. This plan was rigorous in incorporating public outreach and input. The Chamber has long supported this plan in its efforts to improve housing and work toward climate action. The 25% requirement in the Green New Deal was debated under previous mayor and was ultimately shut down. The Green New Deal was put on the ballot by a group that underwent no public process and that obviously did not consult the One Climate Future plan. Any plan that sinks the provision of increased housing density and connection to improved transit will fail to meet climate goals. The Council should put forth amendments to the referendum that more closely align with One Climate Future

Bill Weber of Roaring Brook Rd: On better roof requirement for solar roof requirement, proposes another exception for owner/tenants/developer to agree to buy community solar off the grid instead. Believes this exception will be better than having a solar roof that's ready or a solar roof in the shade. There should be greenhouse gas accounting for any proposed and existing project in the city. There could also be advantages to this with carbon pricing.

This discussion on the Portland Green New Deal will be continued at a later date.

Meeting Conclusion

Councilor Thibodeau motions to adjourn. Councilor Zarro seconds the motion. Passed unanimously, (3-0). Meeting adjourned at 7:59 PM.